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Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/56/203, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/342-S/2001/852, A/56/453 and 488)

Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

1. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that he wished to underscore two points in his report on protection of children affected by armed conflict (A/56/453) as well as some of the activities to which he hoped the Committee would give particular attention.

2. First, the development of a research agenda on the impact of war on children was one of the more important activities undertaken over the past year. The objective was to provide more scientific and reliable information in order to inform and strengthen the action of all concerned. Second, the Office of the Special Representative, playing the role of catalyst and convener, had established several inter-agency working groups. They represented a significant way of seeking to integrate the agenda of war-affected children more systematically into the work of the United Nations and its external partners, and a means of improving collaboration — in particular, with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

3. The latter had an important role to play and had collaborated with his Office in the development of various activities, in particular the innovative child-protection advisers. A collective review of the child-protection adviser experience in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been conducted by his Office, together with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNICEF, in order to strengthen the role of the advisers and be able to replicate the experience in other countries.

4. There had been considerable discussion on the role of children under 18 years of age in connection with truth- and justice-seeking and processes. The issue of how to deal with children who had allegedly been engaged in activities relating to genocide had become critical in the case of Rwanda and Sierra Leone and would certainly arise in the case of Cambodia. A common approach was needed, both with regard to the participation of children as witnesses, and also concerning the appropriate way in which to hold accountable children under 18 who had allegedly committed atrocities.

5. The Office of the Special Representative had made the signature and ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict the subject of a systematic campaign, with the goal of obtaining the 10 ratifications necessary for the Protocol to enter into force before the special session of the General Assembly on children, re-scheduled for 2002. He therefore appealed to delegations to urge their Governments to ratify the Optional Protocol at the earliest possible date. In that regard, the Holy See was to be commended for having deposited its instrument of ratification and for using its network to advocate signature of the Protocol.

6. More needed to be done to move from the elaboration of norms and standards to putting them in place on the ground, as the gap between theory and practice was still too wide. He would be submitting to the Committee a very specific proposal to establish a more effective mechanism for monitoring the conduct of parties to armed conflicts, in order to make certain that they respected their obligation to ensure the protection and rehabilitation of war-affected children.

7. Recent events had underscored three issues: the vulnerability of the young to indoctrination; the alienation of young people from their own society; and the involvement of young people in armed conflicts because of those two factors. It was necessary to go beyond merely dealing with the effects of such involvement and to address the challenge of offering young people more positive, viable alternatives within society, so as to reduce their vulnerability.

8. The international development community had made a significant effort to reach out to local communities affected by war. However, a further effort was required in order to assist them and provide them with greater resources so as to increase their ability to protect their children, because the local communities were the real key to any sustainable strategy to rehabilitate war-affected children.

9. Lastly, he noted that the Security Council summit-level open debate on children and armed conflict based on the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/342-S/2001/852), originally scheduled for 19

September, had now been rescheduled for 20 November.

10. **Mr. Wenaweser** (Liechtenstein), referring to the truth-seeking process in Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Cambodia, said that it would be interesting to have further information on the common approach that the Special Representative had mentioned. There was also the problem of children who were both victims and perpetrators, and it would be useful to know the Special Representative's views on that subject. The Committee considered that, in the case of serious crimes, it was important to hold all those involved accountable, while bearing in mind that, in the case of children who were perpetrators, they were also victims.

11. With regard to the gap between the standards and their implementation, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified by almost all the Member States, but the reality was bleak. It would be useful to know the Special Representative's point of view on the translation of the standards of children in armed conflict into Security Council resolutions — whether he felt that the concerns relating to children were addressed sufficiently in the action taken by the Security Council in specific situations, and whether he felt that the channels for his Office to have an input into the drafting of such resolutions were adequate.

12. **Ms. Al-Hajjaji** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the report of the Special Representative focused on certain areas of the world when dealing with the impact of armed conflict on children to the exclusion of others, and it would be interesting to know why it had only looked at countries such as Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and the Congo when there was armed conflict in many other areas of Africa.

13. Her delegation considered that children were not being forcibly recruited. They joined the armed conflict for other reasons, some of which were mentioned in both the report of the Secretary-General and that of the Special Representative: absence of work, lack of family ties, poverty and ill-understood ideologies. It would have been useful if the Special Representative had commented on the impact of the armed conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and on the pain inflicted on the children of Iraq and Afghanistan; those cases should be included in his next report.

14. The reports had not emphasized the special situation of girl children in armed conflict, in particular their vulnerability to sexual abuse. However, confirmation by the International Criminal Court that such crimes constituted crimes against humanity was a positive development.

15. Her delegation agreed that perpetrators of crimes who were under 15 years of age should receive special treatment; their punishment should be commuted to some form of community service ordered by the Court.

16. Noting that the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights had brought the issue of domestic violence and State violence against children to the attention of the General Assembly, her delegation wished to request the Secretary-General to study those issues and examine the impact of all kinds of intra-family violence against children.

17. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that, with regard to truth-seeking and judicial processes, his views were very similar to those of the representative of Liechtenstein. When children came before such processes as participants or witnesses, they were entitled to all the protection that juvenile justice required. The difficulties and nuances arose when children under 18 were accused of committing atrocities. Then, it had to be considered whether they should be allowed to go free without any blame, whether only certain acts should be punishable, or whether participation in the criminal act was forced or voluntary; accountability had to be balanced against victimhood. In Sierra Leone, most children under 18 who were alleged to have committed atrocities should go before the truth-seeking process, account for what had happened and then undergo rehabilitation. However, in specific, very egregious circumstances, some children of 16 or 17 who did not act under duress should be brought before the judicial tribunals and, if found guilty, subjected to various measures of rehabilitation. Children were always victims, but there had to be an increasing level of responsibility as children grew older.

18. The gap between international and local standards and practices was a major challenge for all actors. The evolving collaboration between his Office and the Security Council had been very fruitful, and the aim was to ensure that the Security Council considered how its resolutions should take into account the specific needs of children. Most recent reports of the Secretary-General and of Special Representatives in the field now contained a section on how specific events were

affecting children and what measures the Security Council should take to protect them. However, it was not the responsibility of the Security Council alone; all national Governments were responsible for protecting their own children, as were all United Nations agencies whose activities had an impact on children, together with civil society and national and international non-governmental organizations.

19. In response to the concern that his report appeared to focus only on some countries while ignoring others, he was trying to treat the issues thematically, by drawing on some experiences. However, his concern encompassed all children affected by armed conflict throughout the world.

20. He agreed on the critical role of indoctrination and ideologies, inspired by religion, ethnicity and socio-economic factors, that led to the participation of young people in armed conflict, but there was also a need to address the factors that alienated young people and made them easy prey to those who wished to manipulate them.

21. Lastly, with regard to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the killing and victimization of children was of special concern to his Office. As for children affected by the sanctions regime in Iraq, in previous reports he had referred specifically to that case and others, urging the Security Council and other entities responsible for sanctions to do more to ensure that children were not the most-affected parties, in particular with regard to their education, nutrition and health. To date, it had not been possible to target sanctions in such a way as to spare innocent children.

22. Responding to a question put by **Mr. Bhattacharajee** (India), he said that indoctrination was often used to foster a sense of alienation and enmity between ethnic or religious groups, creating a sense of "us" and "them"; conversely, alienation and social exclusion could be used as a basis for indoctrination, in order to draw children into conflict. The correlation between the concepts of alienation and indoctrination thus varied depending on the situation.

23. Addressing an issue raised by **Ms. Stevens** (Belgium), who had spoken on behalf of the European Union, he said that the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers must be factored into all programmes. Indeed, the demobilization of child soldiers represented a perfect opportunity for the international community to move from words to resources. There was an urgent need to provide capacity on the ground for the reintegration of demobilized child soldiers into their own communities, not least to enable families to feed the children on their return, to deal with the problem of alienation and to provide viable and attractive alternatives to ensure that the children did not return to the conflict. That meant engaging the children usefully, and providing schooling and vocational training. Local control of the process was essential.

24. He agreed with the representative of Belgium that it was vital to address the special needs of girls in any programme in view of their particular vulnerability in armed conflict, including in relation to HIV/AIDS. During his recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he had witnessed the procuring of girls by troops in the Kapala market outside Kisangani. Girls were doubly victimized, owing to the reticence of local communities surrounding the issue of sexual exploitation and the absence of programmes catering for girls' needs. The international community must address the correlation between the victimization of girls and the conduct of soldiers in conflict situations.

25. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic), echoing the view expressed at a previous meeting by the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, said that the report of the Special Representative (A/56/453) showed evidence of selectivity in that it had yet again failed to mention the situation of children living under foreign occupation. Ignoring the problem would hardly help relieve the plight of such children.

26. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan), noting the expanded cooperation between the Office of the Special Representative and international non-governmental organizations, asked whether such partnerships also existed at the local level. Her delegation would also appreciate more details of the efforts being made to bring pressure to bear on parties to armed conflict in order to elicit compliance with child-protection commitments and obligations. In his report, the Special Representative had referred to the impact of HIV/AIDS on children in armed conflict; in future reports, he might also consider addressing the impact of other diseases such as malaria, and of malnutrition.

27. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), responding to the questions put to him, said that he could only repeat that the report was intended to be

thematic, not country-specific, and that his Office was concerned to protect the rights of all war-affected children in every conflict.

28. Local non-governmental organizations were consulted at every stage of his country visits, including during the preparation stage. Since his Office was not represented at country level, ongoing collaboration was conducted by United Nations country teams, particularly by UNICEF.

29. He would certainly welcome comments concerning the proposal he had mentioned earlier, to establish a more effective mechanism for monitoring the conduct of parties to armed conflicts. Such a mechanism was badly needed to make a difference to the lives of children on the ground. There was general agreement on principles; the details, however, had yet to be elaborated.

30. In his report (A/56/453), he had aimed to highlight the correlation between armed conflict and the spread of HIV/AIDS — an issue which had not received sufficient international attention. He had also, however, stressed the fact that hundreds of thousands of children suffered or died from severe malnutrition and preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and measles. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, some communities consisted entirely of older persons, whole generations of children having succumbed to the "conditions of war".

31. **Ms. Elisha** (Benin) requested details of the Special Representative's advocacy on behalf of children in the area of conflict-prevention.

32. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) joined with previous speakers in regretting that the reports before the Committee — like other reports prepared by the Secretariat — systematically ignored the plight of children living under foreign occupation. Although the issue had been addressed in United Nations resolutions, little attention was given to the implementation of those resolutions. In the previous year alone, over 200 Palestinian children had been killed at the hands of the occupying force. Palestinians could not even bring a single tin of milk into the territory without the approval of the Israeli authorities. The international community must not eschew its responsibilities in respect of Palestinian children.

33. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to resume its general discussion of agenda item 115.

34. **Mr. Baduri** (Eritrea) said that his Government had signed and ratified the Convention in 1994, within a year of becoming a sovereign State, and had translated it into all Eritrean languages to facilitate its dissemination. The Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare had been entrusted with oversight of its implementation. The civil and penal codes had been amended to bring them into line with the Convention, including specific protections for girls through banning female genital mutilation and raising the minimum age of marriage to 18.

35. His delegation could easily relate to the problems of children in situations of armed conflict, since children in Eritrea had suffered during its struggle for independence. The recent border conflict with Ethiopia had marred the tremendous social and economic progress Eritrea had made during its first five years of independence. Meeting the special needs of children traumatized by war had proven to be a formidable task requiring sustained effort. If the goals of the Millennium Summit with regard to children were to be met, concerted global action to mobilize resources was needed. The forthcoming special session on children and the International Conference on Financing for Development should be seized as opportunities to make a global commitment to address the underlying problems, especially in the least developed countries.

36. **Mr. Al Anazi** (Kuwait) said that, in the interests of promoting greater tolerance and further development worldwide, it was important to emphasize the rights of children, as an indivisible part of human rights. Childhood being a crucial stage in the formation of the human character, serious efforts should be made to secure more effective investment in children. His country's attention to children stemmed from the principles enshrined in its Constitution, pursuant to which the family formed the basis of society and young people were afforded care by the State and protected from moral, physical and spiritual neglect. The law also safeguarded and strengthened the family, which in turn offered protection for both mothers and children.

37. Kuwait had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and continued to head the list of Arab States in the annual *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a fact which reflected the importance which it attached to development as a major factor for the advancement of young people. To that end, Kuwait had provided various services and programmes for

children, such as free education and health care, pioneering children's projects and children's cultural activities.

38. With regard to children affected by armed conflict, he commended the role of non-governmental organizations in the endeavour to eliminate the use of children in such conflicts. He also remained concerned by the absence of deterrents against the perpetration of crimes against children, as in the case of the Kuwaiti children deprived of contact with relatives still being held captive by the Iraqi regime. Children in the occupied Palestinian territory likewise suffered from the acts of violence perpetrated by Israeli forces in violation of all international instruments relating to children's rights. It was therefore time for the international community to channel its energies into ensuring compliance with those instruments in order to protect children and guarantee their secure future.

39. In conclusion, he said that Kuwait wished to re-emphasize the solidarity of its children with those of the United States of America and to express its sorrow over the events of 11 September, as a result of which the special session on children had been postponed. He looked forward, however, to the participation of the international community in that session with a view to the creation of a "world fit for children".

40. **Mr. Bhattacharjee** (India) said that there was no one reason for the chilling statistics on the welfare of children reported by UNICEF in its report, *The State of the World's Children 2001*, but if one factor was responsible more than any other, it was the dwindling resources available to developing countries to tackle a problem of such enormous proportions. During the past decade, while their share of global gross domestic product had continued to fall, globalization had limited the ability of their Governments to take independent or affirmative action, particularly in the social field. Global corporate capital had not come forth to supplement the shrinking capacity of Governments: there were no corporate "best practices" in the creation of schools, affordable health care or educational tools. Global partnerships had failed to evolve to meet that challenge.

41. The rights of children must be seen in an inter-generational context, and literacy, particularly from early childhood, was the key to an inter-generational approach. Despite scarce resources, a law was being enacted in India to make primary education compulsory and free.

42. India remained strongly committed to the eradication of all forms of child labour. Its National Human Rights Commission and legal system had been active on the issue, and it was participating in the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. While effective measures against child labour were being taken, however, children should not be forced into the more hazardous informal sector and risk more serious consequences. The Government had kept all related issues in view — developmental, social and legal — when attempting to tackle the problem.

43. His delegation appreciated the work of the Special Representative, and found his recommendations important. However, those who sought to promote their own agendas either through armed conflict or terrorism knew no rules. They used children, as they used others, without scruple. Obtaining from them commitments that could hardly be monitored, let alone enforced, could lull the international community into a false sense of security. Of course, there were no easy answers.

44. **Ms. Suñé Pascuet** (Andorra) said that her delegation remained committed to the negotiations on the draft outcome document of the special session, and hoped that the session would take place with the same level of youth representation as originally planned.

45. The special session on HIV/AIDS had highlighted the situation of the millions of children throughout the world who were either orphaned by the disease or themselves infected. Combating the epidemic should be a priority in coming months. Her Government had signed the two optional protocols to the Convention, and urged all countries to do likewise in order to bring those instruments into force.

46. Education, especially for girls, remained a major element in protecting children from exploitation and breaking the cycle of abuse. The Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children to be held in Yokohama, Japan, in December 2001, should provide new elements for analysis and action.

47. In conclusion, she noted that her Government would submit its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its next session, demonstrating its commitment to all matters relating to children.

48. **Mr. Priputen** (Slovakia) said his delegation called on States parties to the Convention to accept the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, increasing the membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18, as a necessary step in providing the Committee with the capacity to handle the workload resulting from the near-universal ratification of the Convention.

49. The Constitution of the Slovak Republic provided numerous safeguards for children and youth, and its legislation underwent regular review to ensure that it protected the best interests of children. One important step had been the establishment of the Slovak Committee on the Rights of the Child, which served in an advisory capacity to the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. In addition to specific problems affecting children, that Committee was proposing a system for providing information to children on their rights and how to exercise them.

50. **Ms. Limpias Chávez** (Bolivia) said that, upon signing the Convention 11 years earlier, Bolivia had set out to develop a coherent policy for children. It was working to build a country where all children had access to education, adequate food, health care, sanitation and legal protection. Over 60 per cent of its children lived in conditions of extreme poverty, and recent statistics on child survival, school enrolment, abuse, abandonment and child labour gave a discouraging picture of their situation.

51. Poverty was an obstacle to meeting the needs of Bolivia's children, but it would not prevent her country from continuing to promote and protect their rights. There were no excuses to justify their violation. The Government had made it a priority to reverse the deterioration in the situation of children, and had made progress in the areas of nutrition in rural areas, free basic health-care programmes, educational reform which sought to embrace all ethnic groups, and programmes to increase school enrolment for girls in rural areas. Programmes were also aimed at reducing the high level of child abuse and eliminating child labour among 7- to 14-year-olds.

52. Her Government firmly believed in the value of international cooperation and solidarity, the work of non-governmental organizations and the involvement of civil society. Its cooperation with UNICEF in executing the national programme for children had been especially valuable.

53. **Mr. Mun Jong Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the problems facing children worldwide were most often due to poverty, social inequality and irresponsible actions by Governments. Throughout the past 50 years, however, his Government had made children's rights a priority. Despite economic hardships, its children received free medical care and 11 years of free and compulsory education, and enjoyed constitutional and legislative protection of their rights. UNICEF and other international organizations had provided valuable assistance in promoting the welfare of children in the aftermath of recent severe natural disasters in the country.

54. His Government had always paid particular attention to the education of new generations. In that regard, his delegation referred to recent attempts by the Government of Japan to teach its children a distorted version of history that depicted Japan's colonization of Korea as a "just cause" and falsified its history of aggression and exploitation as "development and assistance". It had also failed to mention its crimes against humanity, including the plundering of Korea's natural resources, the use of six million Koreans as slave labour, and the forced prostitution of the so-called "comfort women". Japan should stop those distortions of history and educate its children in a way that would contribute to the building of a peaceful and prosperous world.

55. The family played the most important role in the survival, development and protection of children, for which it must receive support. The negative impact of globalization on developing countries must be mitigated through poverty eradication and debt relief, in order to provide adequate means for the protection and education of their children. His Government would continue to meet all its national and international obligations to build a world fit for children.

56. **Ms. Setyawati** (Indonesia) said it was tragic that one of the issues which the Committee must discuss was children in armed conflict. Her delegation supported the call to all groups engaged in armed conflict to commit themselves to the child-protection standards contained in the Convention.

57. Children represented half the population of Indonesia, and the Government was working with the Parliament to adopt comprehensive legislation on child protection to facilitate implementation of the

Convention and its optional protocols, which it had recently signed, along with ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

58. The Declaration on the Commitments for Children of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) had been adopted as a reaffirmation of its 1993 Plan of Action for Children. It recognized the importance of information-sharing on the rights of the child and the need to address child welfare in a holistic manner. ASEAN member States explicitly agreed to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, trafficking and exploitation, and from armed conflict and victimization.

59. In Indonesia, increasing threats to national stability and the financial crisis had, unfortunately, opened the door to violations of children's rights. Within its limited resources, it was continuing to work toward the goals of the World Summit for Children, including improvements in quality of and access to education, health care, nutrition and social services. National non-governmental organizations were protecting Indonesian children working in resort areas from sexual exploitation. Her delegation urged the World Tourism Organization and other related bodies to disseminate information and strengthen efforts to ensure compliance with the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. It also looked forward to the Second World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which should enhance cooperation between Governments and non-governmental organizations in combating child exploitation at national and international levels. In order to meet the needs of children during humanitarian emergencies, the Government had also established a National Commission for Refugees and Community Recovery.

60. Millions of children continued to die each year from preventable diseases and armed conflict. Likewise, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was unravelling decades of gains in child survival, protection and development. It was her delegation's hope that children would not continue to suffer. Indonesia would not allow its children to become yet another "lost generation".

61. **Mr. Wenaweser** (Liechtenstein) said that his Government was committed to high-level participation in the special session and to a firm, action-oriented outcome that must reflect the status of the Convention as the legal framework for action on behalf of children. Also, children should not be mere objects of multilateral and national efforts, but must themselves be involved in activities affecting them. In the light of the postponement of the special session, he welcomed the initiative to submit a merely procedural draft resolution for adoption by the Committee.

62. Liechtenstein had supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict since the inception of that office. The report of the Secretary-General (A/56/342-S/2001/852) was eloquent on the action still needed to alleviate the devastating consequences of armed conflict on children. It was to be hoped that the Security Council would issue a strong response based on the recommendations in that report.

63. Violence against children could manifest itself in many subtle ways, and should be denounced in strong language in the outcome document of the special session. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the more in-depth consideration given to the topic, especially the initiative of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Since many victims of violence subsequently became its perpetrators, to address that issue was to invest in the future. That obvious link must be borne in mind and a basis established for peaceful patterns of conflict resolution in a violence-free environment for children. He urged the United Nations to examine all aspects of the issue so that the pertinent action could be taken.

64. The time had come to implement the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly, on HIV/AIDS, using a rights-based approach that should guide deliberations on outstanding issues in order to protect the growing number of children orphaned by the disease and to prevent its further propagation. It was vital for women and girls, who were particularly at risk, to decide freely on matters pertaining to their sexuality.

65. National and international education programmes should complement each other. Education was of the utmost importance for survival in a rapidly globalizing world and should continue throughout life; however, the picture for the vast majority of children was extremely bleak, lacking as they did access to the most basic primary education. As the key to poverty eradication, education was not only the right of every child; it was an investment in development and well-being.

66. **Ms. Thandar** (Myanmar) welcomed the achievements of the international community since the 1990 World Summit for Children, such as the quasi-universality of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, poverty, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and trafficking in children were among the remaining evils that needed to be addressed. In that connection, she was convinced that the adoption of the two optional protocols to the Convention would contribute to the protection of children.

67. Children's rights, at the top of the global agenda since the World Summit, were also high on Myanmar's agenda. Since its accession to the Convention it had steadfastly implemented a series of national plans on behalf of children, including enactment of the Child Law and the creation of a National Committee on the Rights of the Child to implement the Convention. It had also submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

68. The country's National Programme of Action and National Health Plan (1990-2001) were being implemented, and the Government was using its own resources, coupled with international assistance, to improve health care even in the country's remotest areas. Better basic child and maternal care, increased iodized-salt consumption, increased availability of drinking water, the vaccination programme for children under one year old, the polio-eradication programme and country-wide immunization had all improved children's health and reduced infant mortality. In programmes run by non-governmental organizations with government assistance, disabled children benefited from community-based rehabilitation, as well as special and integrated education, vocational training and, subsequently, job opportunities.

69. Education enjoyed high priority in Myanmar, and a vast array of programmes and projects were being implemented with the help of UNICEF, UNDP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The percentages of girls and boys in primary and secondary education were almost identical, while women outnumbered men at university level. In addition to its numerous universities and colleges, there were distance-education universities, which used electronic data broadcasting, as well as hundreds of computerized education centres.

70. Contrary to some reports, the minimum age for enlistment had been 18 ever since the era of Myanmar's struggle for independence, although "armed children" still existed in some insurgent groups. After years of the insurgents' meaningless destruction of infrastructure, the current Government had reached unprecedented ceasefire agreements with many of them; since then, their leaders had been engaged in the constructive development of their regions with assistance from the Government. Destruction had been replaced by development, the sound of guns and mortars by the sound of school bells; and poppy fields were being replaced by fields of sugar cane and other crops. Only genuine concern and cooperation could provide a more peaceful life for children in border areas and support the authorities in their determination to replace every gun with a pen.

71. **Miss Durrant** (Jamaica) associated herself with the statements made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative of Barbados, speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community. She said that the tragic events of 11 September had demonstrated in no uncertain terms that security was a precondition for securing a "world fit for children", many of whom had been orphaned or traumatized by those events. Such evils as terrorism, armed conflict and abuse compelled the international community to continue its efforts to assure them of a secure and peaceful environment.

72. The special session, postponed on account of that tragedy, would provide such an opportunity. In that connection, she extended her sincere appreciation to the Executive Director of UNICEF and her staff for their tremendous support to the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session, and called on all delegations to continue their cooperation to ensure that the outcome was in the best interest of every child.

73. Member States had an individual and collective responsibility to honour their commitments made during the World Summit for Children and at the Millennium Summit, and to set new targets to meet the emerging obstacles to children's capacity to realize their full potential. Using the Convention, its optional protocols and other international instruments as a starting-point, the international community must eradicate poverty, protect children from exploitation and guarantee them basic education and health care.

74. If it was to provide a world fit for children, the international community must ensure respect for

human rights, promote a culture of adherence to humanitarian norms with appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and ensure that violators of child-protection laws were brought to justice.

75. Her delegation welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, given the particular vulnerability of girls and the alarming proportions that sexual exploitation and trafficking in girls had assumed with globalization, as had the use of information and communication technologies for spreading child pornography. The early signing and ratification of that protocol would complement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and contribute to the prosecution of child-exploiters. Also in need of urgent attention were the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

76. In view of the negative impact of armed conflict on children, including their displacement and use as child soldiers, her delegation applauded the efforts of the Special Representative to secure commitments to increase attention to child protection on the international agenda, especially from parties to armed conflict. The Security Council must continue to address the plight of children in conflict situations and focus on child protection in United Nations peace operations, address the root causes of conflict and seek the best means of protecting children against its impact.

77. UNICEF's work was especially important for advancing the global child-protection agenda. Its role among internally displaced and refugee children and in post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation deserved special support, as did its focus on priority areas, including education for girls, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and greater protection of children from violence.

78. In conclusion, she said that national and international progress must be consolidated and used as a foundation for the special session on children, leading to the creation of a world fit for children.

79. **Mr. Gabay** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that certain delegations had used the general discussion of the protection of children's rights to politicize the debate and level criticism at Israel. Israeli children, too, were victims of terrorism. Delegation after delegation had taken issue with the absence of any mention of children under foreign occupation in the Special Representative's report, and had obviously not been satisfied by his replies.

80. Children in many regions suffered from the impact of armed conflict. However, the conflict in the Middle East had arisen from a situation imposed on Israel. He did not deny that children in the occupied territories suffered, but indoctrination would not alleviate their suffering, nor would inculcating in them a hatred of Jews or encouraging them to engage in bloody demonstrations organized by the Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah or Hamas. Their suffering might, however, be alleviated through basic education imparted in official schools. Their suffering was the direct consequence of the climate of terror prevailing in the region, which naturally led to armed responses, just as the Israeli delegation had been obliged to invoke the right of reply in the Committee in order to defend itself against attacks.

81. Tuesday, 11 September, had taught all the world about the horrors of terrorism, which Israel had known since its creation. Palestinians had been responsible for the first aeroplane hijackings as early as the 1960s, not to mention the attacks on Jewish centres, schools and embassies, hostage-taking and the explosion of "human bombs" among civilians.

82. He suggested that the Secretary-General should include in his next report the situation of children under the influence of terrorism, which was more than likely to escalate, and the physical and moral impact it had on their future and basic rights. Israel would never yield to terrorism. Only when Israeli children's passion for life had ended such violence would peace come to the Middle East.

83. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that if the name of the market in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, referred to by the Special Representative, was spelt like the city of Kampala in Uganda, it had been a gross misuse of imagination on the part of those responsible in their attempt to link such places to her country. She stressed that there was absolutely no connection between her country and that market.

84. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that his approach was similar to that expressed by the delegation of Benin, particularly with regard to conflict prevention. He had taken careful note of the

remarks made by the Observer for Palestine and the representative of Israel, although during the meeting, in response to remarks by other delegations, he had repeatedly stated his Office's approach and his own attitude to the issue.

85. Replying to the representative of Uganda, he said he was unaware of how the market had come by its name; he only knew that it was called Kampala and that girls there were used for sexual purposes by troops around Kisangani. In conclusion, he expressed appreciation of the delegations' comments and proposals, which would inform the work of the Special Representative. He looked forward to continued dialogue and collaboration with the Committee in the interest of children the world over.

86. **Mr. Roberfroid** (Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said he was gratified at the pace at which the ratification of the optional protocols to the Convention was progressing and at the interest generated by the forthcoming Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Some regional preparatory conferences to define strategies had already been held and others were to follow.

87. Several delegations had referred to street children and child labour, two issues which were directly linked to poverty and occupied an important place in UNICEF's action. UNICEF had long been implementing programmes for reintegrating street children into society and fervently supported the ratification and enforcement of ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. One key to solving that problem lay in schooling for children, which called for reduced drop-out rates and for families' recognition of the importance of education, the main basis of UNICEF's action in the countries concerned.

88. With regard to the discussion held by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2001 on violence at school, many delegations had welcomed that Committee's adoption of a recommendation to the General Assembly to authorize the Secretary-General to undertake an in-depth study on the protection of children against violence, a subject that would be a focus of UNICEF's future activities, especially its medium-term strategic plan.

89. In view of the myriad problems linked to the issue of children in armed conflict, UNICEF collaborated with the Special Representative and had already made significant progress in, for instance, developing education suited to emergency situations. It also actively supported the fight against impunity for those who committed heinous crimes against children, by participating in the preparatory work for the establishment of the International Criminal Court and by upholding the judicial processes in the countries concerned. UNICEF would continue to render that support, especially with regard to the monitoring network, which would allow the international community to document and report unacceptable behaviour towards children. He trusted that those issues would receive due attention at the special session on children now scheduled for 2002.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.